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Democratising Economic Power: The Potential for Meaningful Participation in Economic Governance and Decision-Making

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Summary

Participation is the act of people engaging in decisions that impact their lives. It has been widely promoted in social, political and civic spheres. However, the question of participation in economic governance is underdeveloped. This paper explores participation in economic decision-making – ranging from citizen engagement in economic policy, economic development, or the governance of economic institutions – through an analysis of 28 cases in 14 countries, from both the global South and the global North. It asks what constitutes meaningful participation, in terms of how economic activity is organised and how economic governance is practiced, and what are the conditions that enable these alternative structures and practices? It identifies five conditions for participation in economic affairs, many of these familiar from participatory practice elsewhere: distributed authority; mobilisation; networks and coalitions; deliberation and democratised knowledge. The paper then discusses wider social and political implications of participation in economic governance, in terms of the relationship between the economy and society, and the relationship between economic and political forms of participation. Finally, three key participation challenges are explored: who is participating, how are power relations affecting participation, and whether participation can permeate the mainstream. The overall aim of this paper is to learn from existing and emergent practice in order to deepen knowledge on participation in economic governance, contributing both to public debate and future research.

Keywords: participation; economic governance; economic democracy; power

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Acronyms

BNCB	Brazilian Network of Community Banks
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
ESOPs	Employee Stock Ownership Plans
FEMNET	Women's Development and Communications Network
FNC	National Federation of Coffee Growers of Colombia
FTAA	Free Trade Area of the Americas
GCE	Global Campaign for Education
GCMMF	Gujarat Co-operative Milk Marketing Federation Ltd.
IDS	Institute of Development Studies
IMF	International Monetary Fund
LETS	local exchange trading scheme
MBO	member-based organisation
NAFTA	North American Free Trade Agreement
NASVI	National Street Vendor Association
NGO	non-governmental organisation
OSF	Open Society Foundations
PGS	participatory guarantee system
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
RSA	Royal Society for the encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce
SEWA	Self-Employed Women's Association
SSE	social and solidarity economy
WRE	worker-recovered enterprise

1 Introduction

Over the years, civil society and public action, supported by engaged research, have opened up spaces for participation that increase citizen voice at various levels of political and social processes that affect their lives. However, the issue of participation on matters of economic policy, economic development, or the governance of economic institutions has received comparatively little attention. Economic decision-making most often still takes place behind closed doors. Yet in the context of rising inequality, unjust allocations of resources, and growing political polarisation, there is an urgency to find alternative means to govern the economy by challenging economic power and the short-termism of much economic decision-making, and supporting more inclusive and sustainable forms of development.

This paper emerges from work funded by the Open Society Foundations (OSF) as part of their focus on economic justice. Through this collaboration, the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) and OSF have explored the concept of *meaningful participation* as a core principle of economies in which people are effective protagonists of their own advancement, or what Amartya Sen would call ‘development as capability enhancement’ (Sen 2003: 3). One of the focus areas of this collaboration has been to identify and explore promising cases through which enterprises, communities and societies are bringing *ordinary* people into economic affairs. This Working Paper presents the key findings of the research, and is supported also by a primer on participation for economic advancement, a map of examples and a series of case studies on economic participation, plus other papers, blogs and briefs.¹ The overall aim is to learn from existing and emergent practice in order to develop an initial evidence base on applying the concepts and practices of participation to economic matters, contributing both to public debate and future research.

1.1 Conceptual foundations

This work is informed by thinking from a broad range of fields. In particular, we are interested in the intersection of two streams of literature: on participation and on a more people-centred economy. Within development in particular, there is a huge literature and debate on the role of participation in development processes (Blackburn, Chambers and Gaventa 2000; Chambers 1994; Cornwall 2008; Cooke and Kothari 2001; White 2008). The framing of this Working Paper to focus on *meaningful* participation points to the fact that the term *participation* itself is a highly contested concept (Hickey and Mohan 2004), particularly as relates to the degree of control or power it implies. A variety of *spectra* or *ladders* of participation (Cornwall 2008)² have been produced that identify a range of levels, from simple information sharing, to consultation, to actual control or *empowerment*. Another question is the participation of *whom* – of the most marginalised, of *beneficiaries* or of *stakeholders* and citizens as agents of change themselves (Chambers 1997; Cornwall 2003; Wiebe 2000). A third issue relates to the *spaces for participation*. These spaces are settings, moments and opportunities where people come together and decisions are taken (Gaventa 2006). They include *invited* spaces of co-governance where those who were formally excluded are brought into existing decision-making processes, and participation in alternative *claimed* or *created* spaces that are developed autonomously by less powerful actors. In some cases, the starting point is to open up *closed* or hidden decision-making to wider participation. These debates are further outlined in an associated primer on participation (Oswald *et al.* 2018).

¹ For further information and access to these sources see: www.eldis.org/collection/participation-economic-advancement, www.eldis.org/keyissues/mapping-participation-economic-advancement and <https://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/handle/123456789/14511>

² See also the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation by the International Association for Public Participation Federation, available at www.iap2.org.

In the midst of these debates on participation and its role in development, we have gone back to one of earliest definitions of participation in the field; one that we argue remains highly relevant. Participation entails 'organised efforts to increase control over resources and regulative institutions in given social situations, on the part of groups and movements hitherto excluded from such control' (Stiefel and Wolfe 1994: 5). Such a definition (1) implies collective or *organised* activity, not just individualised forms; (2) shifts the focus from *inclusion* or *consultation* to control; and (3) suggests participation not only in the political or social realm, but includes control over resources (implying economic issues). Of course, while Stiefel and Wolfe's preoccupation was the process of shifting of power to increase control by those formerly left behind, participation is also an on-going process of maintaining and solidifying these gains over time.

Despite Stiefel and Wolfe's focus on control over resources, much of the subsequent literature has focused on participation in projects or social and political issues and decisions, leaving participation in economic governance as an underdeveloped area. This participation in economic matters is the subject of this Working Paper. We therefore focus on decision-making with respect to the economy understood as the production of goods and services, the processes through which they are transferred and exchanged, and the distribution of profits, welfare or other benefits accruing from these activities (Miller 2010; United Nations *et al.* 2005), as well as the governance of these economic processes at different (macro, meso and micro) levels.

While knowledge of processes and conditions for participation in economic governance is underdeveloped, there is a vast and rapidly growing body of literature on more people-centred economies. This work often starts from the problematisation of neo-classical economic theory and particularly how that theory is enacted by modern states and industries. This neo-classical understanding of the economy is centred on competition and transactions between atomised, economically *rational*³ individuals, and regards land and labour only as commodity inputs. This is an economy that is separate or *disembedded* from society and culture (Granovetter 1985; Polanyi 1944), functioning 'as a distinct system with its own laws of motion' (Adaman, Devine and Ozkaynak 2003: 359). The result is wealth extraction and growing inequality, social dislocations, individual feelings of discouragement and low self-worth, resentment towards authorities and institutions, and rapid environmental degradation (Kelly and Howard 2019; Pateman 1970; Raworth 2017; Speth 2012). In contrast, a people-centred economy is understood to support the creation and exchange of multiple forms of environmental, social, intellectual, cultural and physical wealth, in order to meet the needs of all within our planetary boundaries (Adaman, Devine and Ozkaynak 2003; Mathie and Gaventa 2015; Raworth 2017; Speth 2012). It supports community regeneration and wealth circulation, is rooted in democratised ownership, values local assets and supports local agencies (Cameron and Gibson 2005; Kelly and Howard 2019). It often involves citizen self-organising and innovation (Mathie and Gaventa 2015) and has important 'social and solidarity' aspects (Utting 2018: v).

At the intersection of these streams of literature on participation and on a people-centred economy are two sets of unanswered questions. First, what constitutes meaningful participation in economic governance, and how can it be achieved? Second, how might participation enable increased social control over the economy, in ways that transform economic relations and meet the needs of all? These questions are the subject of the rest of this paper.

³ *Rational* is used here in the classical economic sense of individuals making choices to maximise their own self-interest, understood in material terms.

1.2 Outline

This paper is structured as follows. The next section (Section 2) explores in turn three sub-groups of literature at the intersection of participation and a people-centred economy. Then, after presenting the case study methodology in Section 3, Section 4 presents the cases at the empirical core of the paper. Based on an assessment of these cases, Section 5 evaluates what constitutes meaningful participation and how it can be achieved, while Section 6 is more exploratory, examining questions of how participation might translate to increase social control over the economy, as well as considering outstanding challenges and questions. Section 7 sets out our final conclusions.

2 The intersection of participation and a people-centred economy

This high-level overview of the very broad literature on participation and a people-centred economy is grouped into three sub-areas related to the three groups of empirical cases in Section 3. The first sub-area involves different ways of governing business and investment decision-making to be more inclusive. The second sub-area involves elements of economic policymaking that have been opened to wider participation. The last sub-area involves alternative community or cooperative economic structures, often referred to collectively as the social and solidarity economy (SSE).

2.1 Participation in business decision-making

From the mid-twentieth century, new ideas of business governance have emerged in both literature and practice in which workers and sometimes other stakeholders have influence over businesses' decision-making. This industrial or workplace democracy involves 'the exercise of power by workers or their representatives over decisions within their places of employment, coupled with a modification of the locus and distribution of authority within the workplace' (Poole, Lansbury and Wailes 2001: 491). Pateman (1970), in her classic work on participation and democracy, explores workplace participation as a facet of *participatory democracy*. She argues that hierarchical workplaces create resentment towards authority and institutions, while worker participation in decision-making strengthens workplace morale and contributes to a more democratic society overall. Broader notions of *stakeholder capitalism* (Freeman and Liedtka 1997) also assign others, beyond management and workers, with a legitimate voice. These other stakeholders are defined as those affected by a firm's decisions, and may include customers, suppliers, communities, wider society, and even future generations. Much of the literature on these different forms of worker or stakeholder representation within decision-making structures, and/or legal forms which enshrine companies with societal obligations, is concerned with assessing the prevalence of these forms and their benefits for companies, workers and/or society.

One of the oldest and most formally institutionalised types of industrial democracy is that of co-determination (*Mitbestimmung*) in Germany, which emerged from political and economic crisis after the Second World War. Under laws set out in 1976, firms of over 2,000 employees are required to have elected work councils with legal rights to information, participation and consultation, as well as supervisory boards in which half of the members are labour representatives. Supervisory boards have significant power, including in appointing top management and approving major strategic decisions (FitzRoy and Kraft 2005; Keller and Werner 2010). Co-determination is therefore a well-established and legally enforced arrangement that is intended to balance the interests of shareholders and employees within companies. Co-determination has been found to foster trust and

cooperation and increase workers' access to information and bargaining power, with positive effects also on firm productivity (FitzRoy and Kraft 2005; Freeman and Lazear 1995; Hübler and Jirjahn 2003).

Introduced in the USA, also in the 1970s, employee share ownership schemes, such as Employee Stock Ownership Plans (ESOPs), are intended primarily to foster much broader business ownership and a wider distribution of benefits from capitalism (Freeman 2007). As many as one-half of employees in the US and 20–30 per cent of workers in France, the UK, Italy and Japan are estimated to participate in ESOPs or related forms of worker profit-sharing (Kruse, Blasi and Park 2008). However, only 10–13 per cent of worker-owners within these schemes have a voice in decisional processes (Rosen and Rodgers 2007). Yet where shared capitalism does incentivise employee participation in decision-making, workers have been found to be more motivated and committed, and to benefit from greater job satisfaction, access to training and job security (Freeman 2007; Kruse, Blasi and Park 2008). Findings also suggest that firms where employees have an ownership stake are more stable than their more traditional counterparts, with equal or better firm performance, productivity and profitability (Blair, Kruse and Blasi 2000; Blasi, Freeman and Kruse 2013; Cin and Smith 2001).

Other forms of workplace democracy do not necessarily entail employee involvement in company ownership or overall decision-making. Rather they emphasise worker autonomy, with self-managed work groups exercising responsibilities and duties traditionally held by management (Seung-Bum and Guy 2006). Information sharing, power sharing and new forms of reward and recognition systems are enabling factors (Branch 2002), while benefits include increased productivity; quality and innovation; more agile decision-making; higher staff retention; and greater employee satisfaction and wellbeing (Foley and Polanyi 2006; Seung-Bum and Guy 2006). These forms of participative management are understood to be particularly relevant for businesses in complex and knowledge-based industries (Branch 2002).

Interestingly, Winkler, Brown and Finegold (2018) explore the relationship between company decision-making that is participative with respect to workers, and those forms that support effective engagement of wider stakeholders. They find that both employee ownership and employee involvement in decision-making are positively associated with external stakeholder engagement. Employees that are empowered to act on the part of firms are likely to have a greater desire for positive associations with stakeholders, as well as a sense of responsibility on behalf of the firm, and a longer-term perspective. Employee ownership may also lead to less risk-taking as employees cannot exit as easily as shareholders.

Most recently, the B Corp movement has turned the central focus away from worker or stakeholder roles within the decision-making of profit-oriented companies and sought to redefine instead the central purpose of the company. Known as a Benefit Corporation in the US, a *Société à Finalité Sociale* in Belgium or a Community Interest Company in the UK, these are new legal forms that assign companies with dual shareholder and societal obligations, rather than requiring companies to give primacy to shareholder value maximisation. While the B Corp movement represents a substantial innovation in corporate governance, Munch (2012) identifies significant accountability challenges given the dual purposes of these forms. He finds that better corporate governance mechanisms are needed to ensure B Corporations fulfil their societal goals, although he fails to fully explore the role and quality of stakeholder participation within these mechanisms.

Finally, Poole, Lansbury and Wailes (2001) caution that industrial democracy is neither evolutionary nor cyclical, but rather is driven by context. The legal landscape, principal actors' strategic choices and organisational structures and processes are all important determinants of the forms and efficacy of participative management approaches.

Moreover, the degree of power exercised by employees and other stakeholders in business models that are framed as democratic or participatory varies; a problem that is already well established across the participation literature. While some forms of participation enable real control over strategy and decision-making, tokenistic participation can be used by companies to legitimise decisions that have already been taken or as a cost-cutting measure, leaving company management firmly in control of processes, narratives and outcomes and failing to empower those involved (Arnstein 1969; Cornwall 2003; Foley and Polanyi 2006; Greenwood 2007; Lee 2015).

2.2 Participation in government economic policymaking

While participation in business and financing decisions within companies and firms represents one potential avenue for civic engagement on the economy, another pathway is found in how citizens engage – or could engage – in public policy on economic issues, be they in such areas as debt, tax, fiscal and monetary policy, or industrial and economic development. Over the last decades, in many fields, we have seen a shift from policymaking that relies solely on more technocratic forms of decision-making, to ones that insist on broader forms of consultation, deliberation and engagement with members of the public. These also go beyond traditional notions of representative democracy, in which citizens participate in electing representatives who then shape policy, to more participatory ideas of citizen engagement throughout the policy process (Fisher 2003; Gaventa and McGee 2010).

The search for new forms of participatory, deliberative and transparent policymaking has led to new approaches and innovations in dozens of fields, often scaling from a local to national level. A number of studies have documented, for instance, the role of citizen engagement in health policies, the environment, and science and technology (Duarte 2007; Joss 1999; Newell 2010; Paloniemi *et al.* 2015). In terms of participation in economic policy, we find in the literature four kinds of strategies that have been used to strengthen participation in economic areas. These include (a) strategies for greater awareness and economic *literacy*; (b) movements and campaigns to open *closed* spaces by challenging particular policies from the outside; (c) efforts to hold economic institutions more transparent and accountable; and (d) more institutionalised forms of engaging citizens in the policy process. We will quickly address each in turn.

First, addressing the need to challenge and demystify classical economics, a number of civil society efforts have focused on strengthening popular knowledge and awareness of economic policies and issues. As one review of these efforts wrote,

Over the years, these diverse economic education initiatives – some large, some small, some informal, some formalized – have been called ‘popular economics’ or ‘economic literacy’. But, fundamentally, their common purpose is to offer the ABCs of economics, making this knowledge more accessible and relevant to the average worker, citizen or leader, and thus, enabling them to challenge political economic choices that are undemocratic and unsustainable.
(Just Associates and IDS n.d.: 1)

One example of this is the Women’s Development and Communications Network (FEMNET⁴) which is leading a process to strengthen the capacities, networks and strategies among African civil society organisations (CSOs) working on gender and economics at the local level to influence and drive a positive transformation on macroeconomic processes. In this effort, FEMNET makes visible the connections between macroeconomics themes (such as taxation, trade and monetary policy) and microeconomic concerns of feminist advocates (such as unpaid care and economic inequalities). FEMNET is achieving this through an

4

<https://femnet.org/>

innovative approach connecting capacity building, information sharing, dialogue and advocacy processes to promote a feminist approach on macroeconomic themes in Africa.

Second, while some efforts have focused more on overcoming the knowledge gaps on economic policy, these are often linked to examples of citizen engagement, collective action and social movements which have challenged economic policies and power – but usually from the outside, not as part of the formal economic policy process. Examples come from the domains of debt, trade and taxation:

The historic Jubilee Debt Campaign fought for debt relief for highly indebted countries, with some success. In the Philippines, organisations like the Freedom from Debt campaign continue to be highly active on debt-related issues (Jubilee Debt Campaign 2013).

There are many trade examples, especially, for instance, in Latin American debates surrounding NAFTA, Mercosur and the FTAA. Yet studies have shown that these movements often lacked effective participatory and inclusive mechanisms in which they could obtain sustained and meaningful participation (Newell and Tussie 2006).

Movements for greater tax transparency and justice are also widespread, led by groups such as the Global Initiative for Fiscal Transparency, or the Tax Justice Network. Yet studies of the role of publics in tax policy, such as in Uganda, observe that while CSOs are engaging more in tax-related matters, it is too early to see visible reforms, and non-institutional actors have not had significant influence over government tax policies (Kangave and Katusilimesh 2015).

Third, while these examples indicate mobilisation from the outside for greater voice on specific economic policies, other examples have focused more generally on transparency and accountability of large economic institutions such as the World Bank and the IMF, though these efforts too may have little sustained effect. In a study of civil society engagement around the IMF in Africa, Scholte (2012: 185) argues that while various efforts have ‘brought some new voices into global governance’, overall, ‘the scale of depth of these connections has remained modest,’ and tended to favour more established and privileged groups. Another body of work examines the long history of civil society engagement on the World Bank (Fox and Brown 1998), and finds examples of some successes of influence, although these required long term campaigns and coalition building. More recent work on civil society engagement in World Bank lending policy finds that while a number of mechanisms exist on paper, there is little take up by civil society, or indeed, little redress or enforcement of these policies by the Bank itself (Nadelman, Le and Sah 2019).

Finally, while the preceding discussion highlights a number of examples of popular attempts for building economic awareness and deliberation on economic issues, mobilisation and campaigns to affect economic policies, and attempts to influence large-scale economic institutions, these are largely from outside of the established institutional policy processes. While they can point to some successes, we do not find clear examples of large-scale, sustained reforms. The final set of approaches, however, focuses on more institutionalised examples of participatory economic policymaking in which citizens and officials engage over time in *invited spaces* of consultation and decision-making.

One set of institutional arrangements allowing citizens to participate in economic matters are the more than one thousand examples of participatory budgeting (Folscher 2007; Sintomer *et al.* 2012). While offering an excellent model of local participation in the governance of public funds, the areas for engagement are often restricted to budgeting around service delivery, and do not usually include participation on resourcing around broader economic issues and sectors. While participants secure improvements in conditions in their

neighbourhoods, their most pressing problems, related to unemployment or lack of educational opportunities, for example, are generally beyond reach (Wampler 2007).

Much of the discussion on institutionalising or mainstreaming participation in economic policy emerged in relation to the introduction of the Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs) by the World Bank in the 1990s, which mandated that these should be country-driven, promoting national ownership of strategies by involving broad-based participation by civil society (International Monetary Fund 2002). However, while devising and proposing multiple forms of consultation, a number of critiques question how meaningful such participation has been, in part because a large gap existed between the focus on poverty, and the more macroeconomic debt, structural adjustment and industrial policies which significantly affect poverty but around which there was little influence (McGee, Levene and Hughes 2002; Stewart and Wang 2003). Moreover, even though international donors pressured governments 'to forge a public consensus on macroeconomic policy as a means to enhance sustainability and impacts on the poor', finance and budget officials, central bank staff, and economic policymakers often assumed 'that citizens cannot understand or contribute to macroeconomic policy' (Brinkerhoff and Goldsmith 2003: 685).

Writing about the time of the proliferation of the PRSP processes during the 1990s, Brinkerhoff and Goldsmith (*ibid.*) surveyed a number of emerging national-level attempts to strengthen participation in monetary and fiscal policy, including taxation, expenditure policy, and resource allocation. They found that where examples do exist (and the article points to very few), they depend largely on the pre-existence of well-developed CSOs, such as trade unions or national-level non-governmental organisation (NGO) bodies, which can help to articulate citizen demands to high-level policymakers. Even in these cases, most are on the information sharing and consultation end of the spectrum, in which there is little real influence or control. Nevertheless, Brinkerhoff and Goldsmith draw a number of lessons from their review, pointing to the importance of communication with the public through media and advocacy organisations on the issues involved; agencies and staff with the ability to reach out to and engage the public; a focus on information sharing, transparency and demystifying monetary and fiscal decisions; and conducting processes which are iterative and institutionalised, not simply one-off. 'None of these conclusions will apply', the authors find, 'if macroeconomic participation is simply part of the next generation of conditionalities within the latest architecture of World Bank and International Monetary Fund (IMF) lending... Macroeconomic policy depends ultimately on support from citizens and interest groups, and their participation must be built into national political structures and practices' (Brinkerhoff and Goldsmith 2003: 698).

There are many reasons for the lack of more large-scale examples of participation in economic policymaking, particularly related to more macroeconomic policies.⁵ A primary one, argues the Royal Society of the Arts in its study of *Citizens, Participation and the Economy* (Patel and Gibbon 2017) has to do with the fact that perhaps even more than other fields, discussions of *the economy* are often shrouded in jargon and technical terms, and considered inaccessible to non-experts. They cite the work of Ward-Perkins, Earle and Cahal:

In their book published in 2016, *The Econocracy*, authors Zach Ward-Perkins, Joe Earle and Cahal Moran critique the dominance of economic expertise, particularly mainstream neoclassical economic expertise, in determining decisions that are essentially political. They argue that this has created an 'econocracy', which subsumes important political questions into questions of objective economic expertise, to be

⁵ Brinkerhoff and Goldsmith (2003: 686) define that 'macroeconomic policy includes decisions and efforts to control aggregate volumes of credit and money (monetary policy), and to manage aggregate public revenue and expenditure (fiscal policy)'.

determined by economists and policymakers alone. Ward-Perkins *et al.* argue that questions that are legitimately the domain for a wider, public dialogue have become dominated by economic ‘experts’ and removed from public view and scrutiny. (Patel and Gibbon 2017: 21)

As a consequence, ‘those who are most disproportionately and negatively affected by the economy and decisions made about the economy, are often those who are least empowered and least able to influence it’ (*ibid.*: 17).

In response to this gap, the RSA, a UK-based academic association, and others have called for more participatory economic policymaking which incorporates more strongly the experiential knowledge of citizens on economic issues. Based on their own experience running Citizens’ Economic Councils in the UK, the RSA make a number of innovative recommendations, including: strengthening the capacities of citizens on economic issues, creating a resource centre on participatory economics, establishing a *Citizens’ Reference Panel* within the Bank of England and encouraging the Treasury and other economic policymaking departments to trial more participatory approaches ‘including citizen juries and a citizens’ reference panel in the run up to major economic moments’ (Patel and Gibbon 2017: 65). Fundamentally, they argue that there is value in citizens having a voice in crucial issues of national economic policy, providing a plurality of competing perspectives, values, and judgements about trade-offs. They also reason that creating space for citizens in economic policymaking helps relate the work of policymakers to the lives of those citizens, increasing understanding of the challenges they face in balancing competing priorities and interests, and raising the legitimacy of economic policy.

2.3 Participation through community-based and cooperative economies

The literature covered in the previous two sections explores the practice and implications of more democratic participation in economic decision-making spaces traditionally dominated by closed groups of experts and business or political elites. In contrast, the diverse literature in this section explores how citizens, communities and grass-roots movements have claimed and created their own economic spaces. This literature covers forms such as worker, producer and consumer cooperatives, community-based enterprises, self-help groups, community currencies, social finance, time banks, local exchange trading schemes and new digitally enabled variants. These economic forms are often understood as prioritising collective and social goals rather than financial ones, as part of the *social and solidarity economy*. The SSE is ‘fundamentally about reasserting social control... over the economy by giving primacy to social and often environmental objectives above profits, emphasizing the place of ethics in economic activity and rethinking economic practice in terms of democratic self-management and active citizenship’ (Utting 2018: 1). While there is little accurate data on the size of the SSE, especially given that it includes many small, informal and local organisations; one study finds that there are at least 15 million workers in the European Union engaged in SSE enterprises (Nardi 2016: 5). Dash (2016) argues that in contrast to neo-classical economies (as discussed in Section 1), the SSE is underpinned by a logic that recognises that individuals can be rational while being economically *non-rational*.⁶ The literature explores how and to what degree goals that are not purely economic but encompass social aims and mutual benefit, are achieved.

Cooperatives, for example, are collectively owned alternatives to either market- or state-led economic governance; run for the common benefit of members. Currently, cooperative membership numbers one billion globally, with an average of 5 per cent of the world’s ten largest economies comprised of cooperatives (Dash 2013). In developing countries, farmers’

⁶ As discussed in Section 1, the concept of *economic rationality* as discussed in this quote refers to individuals making choices to maximise their own self-interest, understood in material terms. The argument is thus that people can make logical, sound decisions that work against their material interests, because they pursue other goals.

cooperatives make up a significant portion of grass-roots forms (Darko and Koranteng 2015; Intellectap 2016), while globally, agricultural and food cooperatives make up one-third of all large cooperatives (Roelants and Salvatori 2018). Beyond agriculture, cooperatives span many other sectors, with active producer and consumer cooperatives in retail, banking, insurance, health and even industrial sectors, including the Mondragon Corporation in Spain, the world's largest industrial cooperative.

Another variant is the community enterprise. Similar to cooperatives, community enterprises have social aims, but are controlled by people living in the particular area (community) that it intends to benefit, and where any surpluses from the activity are invested (Hayton 1996; Somerville and McElwee 2011). They may include cooperative forms (community cooperatives), where the whole community is intended to participate in governance (Peredo and Chrisman 2006; Somerville 2007), or social enterprise forms where the focus is on producing benefits for the community, without wide participation in governance. Bandini, Medei and Travaglini (2014: 10) explore cooperative forms that have emerged in Italy in recent years, describing their governance structure as 'starting from the participatory logic of cooperation and *aiming* to include a plurality of subjects' [emphasis added]. They term this governance *multistakeholdership*, which means that there is a direct and active participation in decision-making by community members that have different and possibly conflicting interests (*ibid.*). These different constituencies engage as collective economic actors involved in common leadership, solution-seeking and economic risk-taking, rather than acting politically as representatives of competing interests that seek to influence the decisions of policymakers. However, Bandini, Medei and Travaglini (2014) find that achieving robust multi-stakeholder governance has been challenging in practice. In contrast, community social enterprises, such as the community-based tourism enterprises that have been tried in many parts of southern African, avoid these challenges of multi-stakeholdership but frequently suffer from weak community participation and involvement and so lack a communal sense of ownership (Stone and Stone 2011).

Some member-based organisations (MBOs), such as self-help groups and informal workers associations and their federations, are designed to enable the participation of often very marginalised people in economic decision-making (Mathie *et al.* 2017). These MBOs are based on the principles of solidarity and mutual responsibility, and involve the members themselves in leadership roles, although entry barriers can still exclude the most marginalised (Chen 2008; Thorpe, Mathie and Ghore 2017). While MBOs often have practical economic objectives, such as joint savings and loan activities, improving members' bargaining power in the market, or lobbying for policy change, they also act as a social support network. In addition, the experience of associational life has been found to build members' self-confidence and belief in their power to effect change, while also laying the groundwork for broader participation (Mathie *et al.* 2017; Namabath 2014).

Most recently, new digitally enabled economies are being explored as a means to enable socially oriented exchange, including through bringing together communities that span geographies. This digitally enabled 'sharing economy' (Acquier, Daudigeos and Pinkse 2017: 4-6) spans (a) the access economy, 'sharing underutilized assets (material resources or skills) to optimize their use'; (b) the community-based economy,⁷ defined as 'initiatives coordinating through non-contractual, nonhierarchical or non-monetized forms of interaction' that support social bonding, shared values or achieving a social mission; and (c) the platform economy, involving 'intermediate decentralized exchanges among peers through digital platforms'. However, this application of the *sharing* label to the digital sphere has been critiqued for bringing a positive normative gloss to forms that may simply replicate market inequalities in new ways (Belk 2014; Murillo, Buckland and Val 2017). While digital

⁷ Community here implies shared characteristics but not shared geography.

technologies may enable new variants of the SSE, the simple use of technology does not privilege social objectives nor ensure ethical or democratic outcomes.

Across these different forms of community-based and cooperative economies, what determines participation is the degree to which the governance structure 'tends to be more inclusive and democratic, giving voice to different types of stakeholders (workers, volunteers, users, etc.) within the decision-making process' (Borzaga, Salvatori and Bodini 2017: 16). This participatory decision-making lends itself to embedding learning and experimentation (Grasseni, Forno and Signori 2015), as opposed to the more rule-bound forms of participation often found in invited spaces, which emphasise following procedure rather than achieving just outcomes. As a result, through this more 'collectivist-democratic model of organization' (Rothschild 2016: 8), participants are able to identify 'the "best", the "wisest", or the "right decision"', which includes reversing decisions when new insights emerge. This democratic dialogue and control can therefore act as a determinant of economic success (Jones 1980; Rosner 2000). Leach (2016) explores how such consensus-seeking approaches can be as efficient as hierarchies, if people are empowered to speak but at the same time are equally responsible for listening carefully and weighing what other members have to say, enabling consensus to be reached. She also finds that self-management can be correlated with decisional efficiency because as many decisions as possible are left up to individuals or units. In the context of such decentralisation, scale and growth is achieved through federation. 'Federated growth can enable an organisation to scale up while ensuring that the constituent village-level grassroots units remain at a manageable size' (Ghosh 2015: 299).

Despite their social orientation, however, community-based and cooperative economies also face challenges and pitfalls in achieving significant participation. People may lack necessary information about ownership, meetings, and decision-making processes in order to be able to take part meaningfully (Stone and Stone 2011), for example, or they may not make use of opportunities to participate if they lack the confidence or feel they do not have necessary expertise to evaluate options or develop alternatives. If activists dominate, other members or intended beneficiaries may be marginalised or lack a sense of ownership. The result can be *passive participation* (Pretty and Vodouhê 1995), where people are simply informed of activities and act out pre-determined roles, despite formally having shared ownership or decision-making rights. In such cases, the ultimate result can be the failure of the venture all together. Where egalitarian decision-making is achieved, it requires that the group is willing to search for common ground through sustained dialogue and learning, which is difficult where interests are heterogeneous, or where participation challenges the preoccupation with efficiency that dominates more established governance models (Rothschild 2016).

Despite the generally positive tone of the literature as regards the participatory nature of these community-based and cooperative economies, there remains some concern regarding the degree to which cooperative, community-based, social and solidary economy forms *truly* represent an alternative, in the sense of rejecting capitalist industrial economic relations. Although the SSE has, on the whole, emerged from the grass roots in different countries and communities around the world, Utting (2018) points out that governments have often played a direct role in promoting the SSE. While he finds that the most successful examples are facilitated through government technical and financial support, and an enabling regulatory environment, these same governments often limit the potential for significant transformations. Government support has a tendency to instrumentalise SSE organisations for specific policy aims, promoting certain behavioural features that fit rather than challenge the dominant bureaucratic and free market environments. Marques (2014) finds that the jury is still out on whether the SSE is a product and instrument of capitalism, rather than a consciously transformative alternative. She contrasts the SSE in Portugal, which, while presenting a more holistic perspective of development, is still mostly delivering social welfare within a capitalist system, against that in Brazil, which she assesses as offering a true alternative.

3 Methodology

This research employs a case-based methodology in order to explore the practice of participation in economic governance and decision-making, as well as to provide initial insights into wider questions of economic justice. At the heart of the analysis are three in-depth case studies of participation, alongside 25 additional examples; a body of evidence covering 14 countries from both global South and global North. Given the central research focus on the phenomenon of participation and the generally exploratory nature of the investigation, the case selection was purposeful and sought variation in the forms of participation included.

The case collection started with the identification of a range of promising examples of participation in economic governance using published literature, existing networks, and a public call for cases intended to surface unfamiliar or newer examples (see Figure 3.1). Where several similar examples were identified, priority was given to those with particularly innovative or unusual features, or which supported geographical diversity. Through exploring these cases and the relevant literature in an iterative manner, we identified a clear definition of what we meant by participation in economic matters (see Section 1.2), as well as identifying three distinct forms: new business and financing models that enable workers, consumers, communities, farmers, for example, to have a voice; citizen voice in government economic policymaking; and grass-roots alternatives created by people seeking greater control over the economic processes that affect their lives. These forms, explored in Section 4, represent different *spaces* where economic decision-making is taking place, and roughly correspond to the sub-areas of literature just described.

Figure 3.1 Map of 44 promising examples



Note: The red dots represent new business and financing models; the blue dots represent examples of citizen voice in government economic policymaking; the yellow dots represent grass-roots alternatives.

Source: Google My Maps (2019), populated with 44 examples generated through this research.

From this initial mapping, 28 cases were selected for further investigation based on secondary sources. This shortlisting was based on a more refined understanding of participation in economic matters developed through the mapping process, as well as being influenced by practical considerations including availability of information and resource constraints. These shortlisted cases:

- Fit the definition of participation in economic matters; our outcome of interest.
- Employ more meaningful forms of participation, understood as not only informing and consulting, but at a minimum also involving people in aspects of decision-making (see Figure 3.2).⁸
- Are being actively implemented (i.e. are not new initiatives or proposals), so that learning on participation has already been generated.

Figure 3.2 IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation

INCREASING IMPACT ON THE DECISION					
	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.

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Source: International Association for Public Participation – IAP2 Federation. www.iap2.org. IAP2's Spectrum of Public Participation was designed to assist with the selection of the level of participation that defines the public's role in any public participation process. The Spectrum is used internationally, and it is found in public participation plans around the world.

Finally, three cases in which participation is being practiced in profound, cutting-edge and/or impactful ways were chosen as in-depth case studies, involving primary data collection and analysis. Selected case studies each represent one of the three types, and selection was also based on the potential commitment and engagement by the lead organisation behind each initiative, to enable rich insights while aiming to ensure that findings are directly useful to practice. Primary data collection involved interviews with key actors, complemented through observations and spending time in context, focus group discussions, and/or review of online or other material produced by the organisations, in order to understand the context and processes impacting participation.

⁸ For more discussion on different spectra of participation and their meanings, see Oswald *et al.* (2018).

Within-case analysis of these in-depth studies (Section 4) is organised into narratives setting out: how participation happened, the key enabling features and outcomes achieved, and was supported by triangulation of findings between multiple subjects and between primary and secondary information. The results provide an in-depth understanding of participation in different contexts. Cross-case analysis (Sections 5 and 6) then looked for patterns and common causal narratives linking participatory structures and mechanisms with outcomes in terms of peoples' control over resources and institutions. This analysis was further informed with reference to the other 25 secondary cases, as well as literature on participation.

4 Cases of participation in economic decision-making

This section presents the within-case analysis, summarising the 28 examples corresponding to each of the three forms of participation in economic decision-making and providing a more detailed analysis of the relevant in-depth case study. A link to the full in-depth case study is provided, showing where more details can be found.

4.1 Alternative business and financing models

Ten cases (see Table 4.1) present alternative ways of organising business and finance that *invite* workers, consumers, communities or farmers, for example, to have a voice in the way that businesses are run, investment decisions are made, and value chains or sectors are governed. These invited spaces involve structures and mechanisms that enable groups affected by economic activity to participate in decisions over the deployment of resources and the organisation of production, and to hold traditional economic decision makers to account. In general, the underlying aims of these governance changes is to ensure that the benefits created through economic activity are more justly shared by those involved and, in some cases, to enable businesses to be run more effectively.

These cases include examples enabling:

- **Workplace democracy or employee ownership:** W.L. Gore & Associates, the John Lewis Partnership.
- **Community-owned and managed enterprises:** IBEKA.
- **More inclusive market, sector or value chains governance:** Etico, Malawi Tea 2020, Markets for Change, PGSSs.
- **Greater social control over finance:** the Buen Vivir Fund, RSF Social Finance, and the Banco Popular of Costa Rica.

New governance arrangements support processes of deliberation and collective decision-making based on shared ownership (Banco Popular of Costa Rica, John Lewis Partnership, IBEKA) or other peer-to-peer arrangements (W.L. Gore & Associates, Etico, Malawi Tea 2020, PGSSs, RSF Social Finance), or drive more transparent and accountable decision-making by authorities (Markets for Change). The in-depth case study on the Buen Vivir Fund demonstrates how an impact investment fund can be co-governed by financial investors and grass-roots organisational leaders.

Table 4.1 Cases of alternative business and financing models

Name	Country	Description
Banco Popular of Costa Rica	Costa Rica	Hybrid public and worker-owned and controlled bank serving social ends and sustainable welfare of Costa Ricans.
Buen Vivir Fund	USA / international	Lending models and practices controlled by communities' and supporting their holistic wellbeing.
Ethical Trading Company (Etico)	UK / international	Association of small farmers, companies, consumers and charities producing high-quality products that benefit producer communities.
IBEKA	Indonesia	Community-owned and managed mini grids enabling villagers to become producers and consumers of their own energy.
John Lewis Partnership	UK	An employee-owned business for nearly a century, managed through a democratic governance system.
Malawi Tea 2020	Malawi	Sector collaboration towards a tea value chain that sustains living wages for workers and living incomes for smallholders, while remaining globally competitive.
Markets for Change	Solomon Island	Increased voice and participation of women vendors' associations in market governance.
Participatory Guarantee Systems (PGSSs)	Tanzania	Locally focused alternative quality assurance schemes for local food markets, based on farmer-to-farmer peer review.
RSF Social Finance	USA	Public benefit financial services organisation transforming investing, lending, and giving (i.e. grants) to better serve individuals and enterprises.
W.L. Gore & Associates	USA	Workplace democracy in a transnational corporation through employee self-management and horizontal decision-making.

Source: Authors' own

4.2 In-depth case study 1: The Buen Vivir Fund⁹

The Buen Vivir Fund is a participatory impact investment fund founded in 2018 by Thousand Currents, an NGO. It was developed through a collaborative design process involving representatives of grass-roots organisations, investors, advisers and Thousand Currents staff. The Fund promotes a financial model that seeks to be transformative, not transactional, by broadening the definition of return to include communities' holistic wellbeing and non-financial returns to investors, rather than focusing only on economic indicators and growth. Drawing its approach from time-honoured lending and investment practices of grass-roots organisations in the global South, borrowers pay the principal back to investors plus make a solidarity contribution (*aporte*), based on their project's success. The *aporte* is paid to the Fund to support its growth, rather than constituting interest paid to investors.

The Fund has raised US\$1m in loan capital for its initial investment cycle in 2018–20, which it is deploying alongside US\$300,000 raised in grant capital, through the guidance of a *Members Assembly*. The Members Assembly is the governing body of the Fund and is comprised of ten grass-roots organisations from Asia, Africa, and Latin America, eight institutional investors, primarily foundations, and one member from Thousand Currents. The Assembly employs a participatory approach such that investors and grass-roots representatives have equal voting rights with respect to decisions such as approval of new members and terms under which capital is lent.

⁹ Information from the Buen Vivir Fund Case Study (Higdon 2019). See also www.thousandcurrents.org.

4.2.1 Key enabling features

1. Joint ownership structure, which spans geographies, including communities in the global South and US-based institutional investors.
2. Decision-making authority (Members Assembly) which is structurally balanced between institutional investors and community investees, with community groups holding the majority aggregate position.
3. Fund design based on a participatory process involving representatives of grass-roots organisations, investors and Thousand Currents staff.
4. Diagrams, infographics and videos used to also communicate aspects of the Fund design and operation with community members not present at meetings.
5. Investment terms and practices based on grass-roots organisations' expertise and experience of traditional lending and wealth sharing models; with structures designed to shift risk away from the grass roots and onto investors that can more easily shoulder it.
6. Financial gains collectivised through use of *aportes*, rather than transferred to investors.

4.2.2 Outcomes

The Buen Vivir Fund is still at an early stage of development. In its second year, the Fund is now fully operational, having completed its first round of loan disbursement. To date, the Buen Vivir Fund has linked US\$427,700 in loan capital to US\$113,000 of grant capital across nine projects led by grass-roots community organisations in Guatemala, India, Mexico, Nepal and South Africa. These grass-roots organisations each employ entrepreneurial, micro-lending and community-driven wealth-sharing practices proven effective in their local contexts. Examples of projects which are benefiting include: strengthening and expanding markets for fair-trade cooperative suppliers in Mexico; and building affordable housing for migrant women and children in South Africa. Over the next five years, the Buen Vivir Fund is poised to expand its membership to between 30 and 50 and increase its investments to US\$5m.

An important achievement of the Fund has also been the demonstration of the potential for new participatory structures in impact investing, such as the Members Assembly, which mean that borrowers have a voice in shaping investment practices and exercise control over lending requirements. In addition, the structures change the nature of risk sharing between borrower and lender, with repayment time frames from two to as many as 15 years. This risk sharing acknowledges that investors have a greater capacity to manage risk than grass-roots borrowers do.

Although in its early stages, the Fund aims to support even broader outcomes than access to finance and more participatory decision-making. Under the heading of *buen vivir returns*, the Fund is intending to actively measure interrelated social, environmental, cultural and other returns that it generates. For example, *buen vivir returns* may include: supporting people to work with dignity, use their creative capacity, and feel joy; improved health and wellbeing; a healthy and thriving planet; the restoration of cultural knowledge, traditions and pride; strengthening the leadership of all; and creating a balanced relationship to money.

4.3 Citizen voice in government economic policymaking

In seven cases (see Table 4.2), citizens are consulted, involved or invited to collaborate in economic policymaking on issues such as debt, tax and interest rates, or the governance of particular sectors or markets. In most of these cases, spaces for citizen participation have only been opened as a result of concerted campaigning by civil society, citizens or workers. These processes stand in contrast to typical macroeconomic policymaking in which the legalistic and technical nature of issues excludes or is used to exclude wider voices. In these cases, participation is intended to support greater transparency, accountability and quality of

policymaking, as well as reflecting the concerns and aspirations of ordinary people and protecting their economic rights (e.g. to a livelihood, to access resources).

Table 4.2 Cases of citizen voice in government economic policymaking

Name	Country	Description
Asmare	Brazil	Engagement of waste pickers cooperative in municipal policymaking regarding informal recycling.
Citizens' Economic Council programme	UK	Demonstrating a process to bring citizen voice to macroeconomic policy, such as interest rates or budgetary decisions.
Civil Society Mechanism, UN Committee on World Food Security	International	Formally guaranteed participation by civil society in global deliberations on food production, consumption and justice issues.
Civil Society Platform on the IMF Programme	Ghana	Coalition campaigning for and engaging in better public financial management, particularly related to an IMF loan package.
Citizen Helpdesks	Liberia	Enabling communities affected by mining to better understand and act upon Mineral Development Agreements to hold decision makers to account.
Jubilee Debt Campaign	Global	Global political campaign to bring about US\$100 billion in debt relief for more than 35 developing countries.
National Street Vendor Association (NASVI)	India	Lobbying for and then co-authoring a national urban street vendor policy enabling fairer economic participation.

Source: Authors' own

These cases span local to national and global scales, including examples that:

- **Support communities to hold government and business to account:** Citizen Helpdesks.
- **Create formal spaces for civil society engagement:** the Civil Society Mechanism for relations to the UN Committee on World Food Security, through which the UN has institutionalised the participation of CSOs and social movements including family farmers, women, youth, workers, fisherfolks and indigenous people, in decisions related to food markets and food security.
- **Campaign and challenge economic policies from the outside, involving informal workers, social movements or CSOs campaigning for and often successfully gaining a direct voice in decision-making:** Asmare, Citizens' Economic Council programme, the Civil Society Platform on the IMF Programme, the Jubilee Debt Campaign and NASVI.

In most of these cases, networks and advocacy coalitions of CSOs, trade unions, community-based organisations, and/or NGOs have been co-created (Asmare, the Civil Society Platform on the IMF Programme, the Jubilee Debt Campaign and NASVI) to press open closed spaces. In one case, however, civil society is invited into decision-making (the Civil Society Mechanism for relations to the UN Committee on World Food Security), while the Citizens' Economic Council programme is piloting participatory mechanisms as part of advocating for more open policymaking. Finally, in the case of Citizen Helpdesks, community members are being supported to use existing policy tools to hold decision makers to account. Through networking, knowledge sharing, technical support, and the piloting of new models, the legitimacy and capacity of community engagement in economic policy is being demonstrated, promoting greater transparency, accountability and improved policymaking. The in-depth case study on the Ghana Civil Society Platform on the IMF Programme shows

how 11 CSOs came together and fought to have a voice in the design and monitoring of an IMF-based credit arrangement for Ghana.

4.4 In-depth case study 2: Ghana Civil Society Platform on the IMF Programme¹⁰

In November 2014, 11 Accra-based CSOs working on social accountability, anti-corruption and governance joined forces with the aim of influencing the IMF-backed extended credit arrangement for Ghana (2015–18). This Extended Credit Facility of about US\$918m or 180 per cent of Ghana's quota at the IMF was the country's sixteenth stabilisation programme with the IMF since independence (1957) and was intended to restore debt sustainability and macroeconomic stability to the country. The new Civil Society Platform on the IMF Programme wanted to ensure that citizens' concerns were reflected in this agreement between the IMF and the Government of Ghana, and then to monitor that the government abides by the programme conditions.

Prior to the formation of the Platform, there had been no citizen initiative specifically dedicated to a serious economic intervention in Ghana. However, the secretariat, composed of the 11 founding organisations,¹¹ brought together dozens of CSOs, academics and non-state actors in a forum to deliberate on, agree and then communicate their demands. Follow-up forums have focused on reviewing and providing on-the-ground feedback on programme implementation and the subsequent management of the economy.

The Platform often relies on the expertise of academics to prepare position papers and independent assessments and key resource persons to help translate/explain the implications of macro figures to participants. Member organisations that undertake budget tracking may also be given the space to share their findings. The Platform has thus been able to articulate the views of civil society in language that policymakers can relate to, transforming grass-roots ideas into a kind of policy dialogue that is able to compete favourably with ideas coming from other angles. In doing so, the Platform has been at the forefront of CSOs' engagement with the IMF and the Government of Ghana on economic stability and fiscal reform.

4.4.1 Key enabling features

1. Horizontal network of diverse CSOs, academics and others to collectively influence macro-economic and fiscal policy.
2. National advocacy supported by international civil society, enabling the Platform to also engage the IMF in Washington DC.
3. National assemblies in Accra to discuss and debate issues and ideas, review progress, assess programme implementation and agree communiques setting out Platform positions.
4. Support from thinktanks and academics to prepare independent assessments of financial results and explain the implications of macro figures.
5. Fiscal accountability workshop to raise civil society capacity in budget tracking.

4.4.2 Outcomes

Short-term achievements included the creation of horizontal and vertical advocacy networks, and spaces for deliberation involving participants from civil society and thinktanks, as well as government agencies and development partners. This process thus opened closed policy spaces, enabling civil society to press for economic policy reform. These processes also led

¹⁰ Information from the Ghana Civil Society Platform on the IMF Programme case study (Aloryito 2019). See also www.econgovplatform.org.

¹¹ Now increased to 16.

to greater civil society knowledge and technical capacity with respect to macroeconomic issues.

These sustained advocacy efforts reframed the government's fiscal indiscipline not as a problem of debt repayment but one directly impacting household spending and social protection. These efforts led to the safeguarding of pro-poor development spending and an extension of the IMF programme by a year, and supported key structural reforms aimed at strengthening Ghana's fiscal institutions and averting the need for another IMF bailout in the future. Fifteen pro-poor interventions were protected, with the IMF programme stipulating a minimum level of outlay. The Platform also achieved key reforms to the management of public finances, government liabilities and Central Bank financing, following significant advocacy, which was backed by the IMF.

More generally, the Civil Society Platform has strengthened the transparency and accountability of the government and the IMF towards the citizens that ultimately bear the impact of economic decisions. It has also helped establish civil society legitimacy on macroeconomic issues, both nationally and internationally. Over the period of the bailout, the Platform was invited to and attended meetings with the leader of the government's negotiating team and senior officials in the Ministry of Finance. The IMF has also recognised the Platform (alongside similar efforts in Ukraine) as a model for IMF-citizen engagement internationally.

As of March 2019, the IMF bailout programme officially ended. Nevertheless, the Platform recognises that Ghana faces ongoing economic challenges, particularly with upcoming elections in 2020, and the risk of fiscal slippages and the possible reversal of macroeconomic gains. The Civil Society Platform on the IMF Programme has now transitioned to become the Economic Governance Platform, to continue to engage the Government of Ghana to ensure that fiscal responsibility is internalised for the common good.

4.5 Grass-roots economic alternatives

Cases of grass-roots economic alternatives (see Table 4.3) involve structures of exchange and ownership rooted in collective autonomy and mutual benefit, including various forms of cooperatives, and other alternative ownership models. These spaces are created or claimed by groups that are traditionally excluded from economic decision-making. Participation is fostered via democratic, horizontal and decentralised processes, including with respect to the rules and structures of governance. The goals are not only economic, and there is often a strong emphasis on solidarity, group self-reliance and collective action.

These cases include examples of:

- **Cooperative ownership and decision-making:** the GCMMF and the Mondragon Corporation, two of the largest cooperatives in the world, as well as the FNC in Colombia, WREs in Argentina and the Up & Go Cooperative.
- **Support for cooperative development:** the 'Preston Model', which aims to foster greater local wealth circulation, including through the development of new cooperatives.
- **Community currencies, social finance and/or local exchange schemes:** Puma LETS, Slow Money and the BNCB.
- **MBOs engaging also in community enterprises:** the RUDI Multi-trading scheme in India and PEKKA.

Table 4.3 Cases of citizen voice in government economic policymaking

Name	Country	Description
National Federation of Coffee Growers of Colombia (FNC)	Colombia	Farmer-governed federation of 540,000 coffee growers that is increasing quality of life for growers and gaining greater control over marketing of Colombian coffee internationally.
Brazilian Network of Community Banks (BNCB)	Brazil	Solidarity finance involving 113 community banks following the Banco Palmas / community currency model.
Gujarat Cooperative Milk Marketing Federation (GCMMF)	India	Cooperative of smallholder dairy farmers that control one of India's largest food product businesses.
Mondragon Corporation	Spain	A corporation of cooperatives and other bodies, bound by solidarity mechanisms that forms the tenth largest industrial group in Spain.
PEKKA	Indonesia	Female Headed Family Empowerment Programme involving a federation of savings and borrowing cooperatives and other activities supporting empowerment of marginalised women.
Preston Model	UK	Local SME and cooperative development enabled through greater local procurement by anchor institutions, all contributing to greater local control of the economy.
Puma local exchange trading scheme (LETS)	Spain	Local exchange scheme enabled by an alternative currency and supporting localised consumption and the redeployment of under-utilised skills.
RUDI Multi-trading Company	India	Community enterprise for trading local, good food; owned by small-scale farmers, and women members of SEWA (Self-Employed Women's Association).
Slow Money	USA	Social finance scheme to redirect capital into local food systems, through self-organising local groups that use a diversity of funding approaches.
Up & Go Cooperative	USA	Online platform bringing together cooperatively-owned cleaning businesses for fair work conditions and liveable wages in a sector usually characterised low-paid work.
Worker-recovered enterprises (WREs)	Argentina	Bankrupt factories and businesses recovered by their workers and put back into business under cooperative ownership.

Source: Authors' own

Two of these cases are digitally enabled. These include the BNCB, which has grown from the experience of Banco Palmas over 20 years ago, and is now experimenting with digital technologies to deliver solidarity finance. The other example is Up & Go, which uses a digital platform to enable cooperative working and decision-making.

In all of these cases, new participatory structures were co-created by their members where collective decision-making takes place. In many of the cases (GCMMF, Mondragon Corporation, FNC, WREs, Up & Go, PEKKA and RUDI), participants not only have a voice but have also become collective owners of new or recovered enterprises and other assets. For others (BNCB, Puma LETS, RUDI, the Preston Model and Slow Money), the main emphasis is on changing the dynamics of exchange, to support more localised trade that has a social as well as economic purpose.

Broader outcomes have led to more inclusive economies and more cohesive societies, supported by narratives and practices of interdependence and shared exchange. For example, when community residents were asked about Banco Palmas' impact, they highlighted 'getting to know other people' alongside 'increasing my income' (França Filho, Silva Júnior and Rigo 2012: 511). The in-depth case study on PEKKA in Indonesia highlights how the efforts of an MBO can support the economic security and social integration of highly marginalised rural women.

4.6 In-depth case study 3: PEKKA¹²

PEKKA (Women-Headed Household Empowerment) is a membership-based organisation empowering over 31,000 female heads of household in 20 provinces of Indonesia through three main economic activities. These are: saving and borrowing through member-owned cooperatives that are based on democratic and participatory decision-making; a closed trading and marketing system branded as PEKKA Mart, allowing members to buy basic groceries and also sell their produce; and economic lobbying and advocacy. At PEKKA's core are 2,559 *PEKKA groups* at village level and 62 cooperatives at sub-district level, which are supported with mentoring, training and leadership programmes. In 2013, a new PEKKA Federation was also established at national level, through which PEKKA groups and cooperatives connect with national policymakers and engage in advocacy with other Indonesian women's movements.

From the outset, PEKKA emphasised the need to move beyond organising marginalised women as beneficiaries of services to engaging them as decision makers in economic activities that directly affect their lives. Through membership of saving and borrowing cooperatives, female heads of household have been able to increase their access to and control over resources. Women use these loans not only for micro or small family businesses, which account for about 20–25 per cent of lending, but for advancing their economic situation more generally, such as investing in education for their children (35–40 per cent) or the purchase or improvement of a house (15–20 per cent). The development of the PEKKA Marts has also enabled members to engage in a local trading system through closed value chains and collective purchasing.

While self-organisation has proven to be empowering, the economic activities realised by these women are still very much limited to traditional gender roles such as cooking, sewing and weaving. Self-organisation also has limitations where it does not engage with the wider local economy to extend agency outside the strict cooperative structure. To address these challenges, PEKKA is now working to engage with economic and governmental actors, as well as to influence community mindset, culture and traditions, which act as significant barriers to greater participation. PEKKA is slowly making progress through an often long and difficult process of advocacy.

4.6.1 Key enabling features

1. Self-organised saving and borrowing cooperatives (PEKKA groups), and trading and marketing units (PEKKA Marts) owned by women that are otherwise highly marginalised.
2. Direct decision-making by all members on the basis of one person, one vote, including deciding on rules for saving and borrowing, interest rates, lending decisions, profit sharing, payment terms, and prices.
3. PEKKA group participation in district-level association structures that take decisions and set agendas for action, via democratically elected representatives.
4. Exchange of information within the nationwide network of cooperatives.

¹² Information from the PEKKA case study (Quak 2019). See also <https://en.pekka.or.id/>.

5. Field staff that support awareness raising, and women's access to and control over capacity-building activities.
6. Autonomous national federation for policy advocacy and engaging with other social movements, created through a seven-year democratic process of design and organisational development.

4.6.2 Outcomes

Through membership in the PEKKA cooperatives, female heads of household have been able to increase their access to resources. By utilising saving and borrowings functions, women access land or fund their microbusinesses (e.g. loans to buy inputs in larger volumes, to invest in new activities). Loans are also used to increase resilience and reduce precarity, as women pay off old debts and rid themselves of the pressure of high interest rates. Loans are also used to gain greater control over livelihoods, e.g. by being less dependent on local traders for inputs, or by being able to increase the volumes they sell.

Importantly, PEKKA members are collective owners of these structures, including their group's savings and the buildings that serve as their meeting places and which house the PEKKA Marts. This shared ownership means that PEKKA members have better control over economic processes that affect their lives. They choose the purposes that they put the loans to and collectively control lending terms, meaning that loans are easier and less time consuming to access than through formal lending channels, with interest rates that are more reasonable and conditions that are more predictable than informal moneylenders. PEKKA Marts create a local trading system that benefits women through easier access to household products and more flexible payment terms. Members also share in PEKKA Mart profits.

Towards achieving these ends, important first-level outcomes include the mobilisation of female heads of household and the development of structures to enable their participation. Cooperative managers also highlight a change in mindset as an essential pre-requisite, building members' determination and willingness to save. PEKKA members routinely exchange information and experiences, and so build their collective power through what is called *female popular education*. While these shifts are difficult to measure, the fact that PEKKA has been active for 18 years and reached a membership of over 31,000 women suggests that these changes are substantial and enduring.

Longer term, the individual and collective empowerment, and greater control over resources is making a difference to the women's status, trust and respect within the community, and increased their confidence to speak out to other community members or during village meetings. PEKKA members are also able to use the saving and borrowing through the cooperative to have more control over their economic security by investing in education for their children, helping other family members in their business, or by purchasing or improving a house.

5 Enabling conditions for participation

This section presents crosscutting themes from the analysis across the three groups of cases, in terms of how meaningful participation in economic governance can be achieved. Five conditions that enable more participatory structures and practices are identified: distributed authority; mobilisation; working through networks and coalitions; deliberation; and democratising knowledge. These conditions are not unique to economic decision-making but are familiar from broader experiences of participation. This section therefore also draws from the wider body of literature on participation, while emphasising features that respond specifically to the economic context.

5.1 Distributed authority

In many firms and governments, relatively hierarchical or centralised forms of economic decision-making and/or ownership are typical. In contrast, distributed authority involves shared decision rights about economic matters via horizontal governance structures or networks, ideally reaching those closest to the relevant issues or problems, who are able to evaluate options and select the best alternatives (Grandori 2009; Ostrom 2010; Sah and Stiglitz 1985). Arrangements may also involve distributed or collective ownership of assets.

A core enabling feature in many of the cases are structures which (re)distribute organisational ownership and authority over a particular set of economic decisions to those who are otherwise typically excluded. For example, the Buen Vivir Fund is unique in distributing decision-making authority related to investment fund management evenly between investors and investees, through shared voting rights in the Members Assembly. In the PEKKA example, cooperatives are owned by the members of the local PEKKA associations, with decisions taken on a basis of one person, one vote, no matter how much money they have in the cooperative. In both cases, participants' authority extends to design issues, rather than only focusing on operational decisions within a system defined by others. For example, PEKKA members set their own interest rates, while the founding members of the Buen Vivir Fund collaboratively designed the investment terms, financial practices, and governance structure.

In other cases, it is the distributed ownership of assets that enables wider participation. At the Banco Popular in Costa Rica, for example, any worker in the country who has held an account with the bank for over a year receives an ownership share accompanied by a voice in decision-making. In the case of the worker-recovered enterprises that emerged in Argentina in response to the country's crisis of 2001, former employees seized control of failed factories and enterprises and restarted them via assembly-based decision-making, and the socialising of productive relations.

However, shared ownership and voting rights are not the only mechanisms through which decision-making authority can be distributed. Other forms offer *strategic control beyond ownership* (Sacchetti and Borzaga 2017) via structures that allow for a plurality of interests to be pursued through cooperation and reciprocity. One example is the case of RSF Social Finance, which holds quarterly pricing meetings for its borrowers and investors to discuss and influence interest rates. Each participant discusses their interests and motivations, and together the group gains insights into each other's financial needs, priorities, and plans.

Another example is that of workplace democracy at W.L. Gore & Associates. Gore's *lattice system* of employee self-management means that decision-making authority is defined by relevant expertise in a particular area, rather than being based on titles or hierarchies, as is the norm in other large private enterprises. Employees (called 'associates') step forward to lead small self-managed work teams when they have the expertise to do so, a practice known as *knowledge-based decision-making*. The small size of the teams also enables free information flow and secures collective ownership in decisions taken. This lattice structure has some parallels with devolution in the political arena, where (some) central government functions are devolved to be closer to those directly affected by a particular issue or set of problems, in order to deliver better policy outcomes and more accountable leadership (Faguet 2014). Although Gore's lattice structure means decision-making takes time, it leads to commitment and has supported the employee-driven innovations that are core to the company's success over the past 60 years.

In contrast to these enterprise or organisation-based examples, the group of cases of participation in economic policymaking rarely started from the (re)distribution of

decision-making authority. Instead these cases largely emerged from outside established institutional processes, with social movements that pressed to open *closed* policymaking spaces (Gaventa 2006), challenged governments to act with transparency and accountability, and eventually allowed for a greater plurality of interests to be pursued. In Ghana, the Civil Society Platform on the IMF Programme, for example, had to first advocate for civil society inclusiveness and a broader consultation with Ghanaian citizens. Once the legitimacy of civil society had been recognised by senior IMF officials in Washington DC, then an ongoing dialogue emerged. Similar processes occurred in the cases of NASVI, Asmare and also the Jubilee Debt Campaign.

5.2 Mobilisation

While distributed authority refers to decentralisation of decision-making rights, mobilisation refers to the actual engagement of people in these governance spaces in order to effect change (Cornwall and Coelho 2004; Heller 2001; Leach and Scoones 2007). It may also include their engagement in efforts to create or open such spaces. Mobilisation may be driven by the individuals concerned (self-mobilisation), and/or be enabled through engaged leadership or social movements.

Even where new *participatory institutions* (Cornwall and Coelho 2004) are inviting citizens to engage, mobilisation is still needed to close gaps between these new spaces and the actual participation of citizens, especially those that are socially and economically marginalised. Participation requires that people view themselves as active citizens that are willing to act to effect change (*ibid.*), are aware of their rights and needs, and have the capacity to engage in these processes. However, these characteristics cannot be taken for granted and may need to be *built* and *learned*, as people gain a sense of their *power within*.¹³ Mobilisation may be especially important in economic governance or with respect to business decision-making where concepts of *accountability* and *rights* are less well embedded than in political domains. This raising of consciousness is often a first order outcome of participation, built through processes of mobilisation.

The findings from the PEKKA case study, for example, emphasised the importance of starting from within the women's groups, through self-organisation and teaching each other to create ownership and stimulate mindset change. Mindset (understood as determination and willingness) was critical to enabling members to use their abilities to make positive changes in their lives. These processes may be similar to the ways in which marginalised communities mobilise for political engagement (Conyers and Cumanzala 2004; Parry 2018). Self-mobilisation can also create a virtuous circle where experience with participation in one sphere of activity creates awareness, ambition or capacity for participation in other areas (see Section 6.2 for a discussion of these connections).

In some cases, intermediaries such as community leaders, CSOs and governments play a small but catalytic role in motivating self-mobilisation towards positive economic change. For example, in the case of Asmare, poor people who earned a living by collecting recycling waste (known as '*catadores*' or waste pickers) faced appalling working and living conditions and discrimination. However, a local NGO of the Catholic Church saw the potential for the *catadores* to organise and voice priorities and demands to the city government regarding their right to earn a decent living. In the Citizens' Economic Council programme, the RSA has been informing citizens about economic deliberation processes with the aim of increasing citizen voice in macroeconomic policymaking, while also aiming to influence politicians to open up closed policymaking spaces.

¹³ The power within refers to a person's sense of self-worth and self-knowledge, and the capacity to imagine and have hope. See Oswald *et al.* (2018) for a discussion of different sources of power and different ways in which it can be exercised or experienced.

Mobilisation may be especially crucial where 'uneven capitalist development, resilient social cleavages and various forms of bureaucratic authoritarianism have blunted lower class collective action' (Heller 2001: 131). The city of Preston in the UK, for example, is situated in the north-west of England where the British cooperative movement began in the nineteenth century. However, over time this cooperative economic activity has diminished and as of 2016, there were as few as 20 organisations in Preston that saw themselves as cooperatives (Manley and Frogett 2016). Now, however, the local authority is working to catalyse local wealth building and circulation, including through encouraging the formation of cooperatives and solidarity enterprises. To this end, it has supported the development of the Preston Cooperative Development Network in order to actively promote the ideals of cooperatives and a way of life that enables the participation of citizens.

In contrast to many of these examples, in the case of W.L. Gore & Associates, self-mobilisation is not so much a first order outcome as point of departure. While the company embraces workplace democracy, they believe that some workers would not thrive under this system of employee self-management and horizontal decision-making. Therefore, they only hire a small percentage of applicants that demonstrate the right motivation and mindset. This finding leaves an unresolved question of how broader mobilisation and participation could be achieved in such cases.

5.3 Networks and coalitions

While neoclassical economics focuses on the individual as an autonomous actor with economic agency, atomised individuals, especially those who are economically marginalised, have limited power over economic affairs. On the other hand, when individuals work together, through informal associations or NGO advocacy coalitions, for example, they can and do have influence (Bendell and Ellersiek 2012; Dash 2016; Joshi 2007; Tsai 2007). Mobilisation therefore does not only or primarily involve individual engagement in economic-decision-making, but also engagement through networks and coalitions, which may span multiple levels or geographies.

Networked approaches have supported citizen participation across several of the cases of economic policymaking, many of which have the character of a social movement. For the Civil Society Platform on the IMF Programme in Ghana, a series of national fora were the fulcrum of horizontal participation, with diverse CSOs, academics, government agencies and others coming together to discuss issues, review progress, assess programme implementation and agree demands. In addition, and consistent with the experiences of transnational advocacy coalitions (Gaventa and Mayo 2010), international actors provided the Platform with important resources and legitimacy. In particular, Oxfam, through its international network, helped identify influencing opportunities and open dialogue between Ghanaian CSOs and senior IMF officials in Washington DC. Together with Oxfam, the Platform's representatives met with IMF Executive Directors or their advisors to successfully press the case for civil society engagement as part of the negotiations in Ghana.

Other examples include NASVI in India, where street vendors' associations have successfully lobbied for a national policy for street vendors. Resources and legitimacy came through connecting local and national levels, including through local street vendors' associations federating nationally and joining in coalition with other national civil society actors. In the case of PEKKA, cooperatives and associations have organised into an autonomous national federation following a seven-year exercise in democratic process, leadership and organisational development.

Beyond policy advocacy, the BNCB is a national network of community banks in Brazil, inspired by the Banco Palmas model of solidarity finance. The BNCB is seeking to spread this model to different parts of the country through advocacy, exchanging experiences,

articulating policies and partnerships, and supporting the creation of new community banks. The BNCB now has a network of 113 community development banks, although not all are rooted in the same broad local movement or exhibiting the same degree of participation as Banco Palmas. This experience demonstrates both the power of networks to spread new economic forms like community banks, as well as the challenges of nurturing participation in new locations.

One of the most successful examples of networked participation through grass-roots alternatives is the Mondragon Cooperatives Corporation.¹⁴ Mondragon was founded as a single cooperative in the Basque region of Spain in 1956 and has gradually expanded into an integrated international network of 266 companies and cooperatives, involving over 80,000 people and 15 technology centres. International expansion has involved its challenges, however, as nearly 140 productive subsidiaries abroad and 30 out of 45 in Spain but outside the Basque region fail to retain the cooperative model (Bretos, Errasti and Marcuello 2019; Williams 2007). However, Mondragon is working to raise the proportion that are cooperatives while promoting worker participation.

5.4 Deliberation

Deliberation involves a communicative approach to conflict and problem-solving, through which participants exchange arguments, share viewpoints, and consider different perspectives and options, in order to shape individual and collective preferences. Deliberation enables more distributed rather than hierarchical decision-making (see above) by making different participants' interests explicit while seeking to generate solutions based on argument rather than power (della Porta and Felicetti 2018; Mansbridge *et al.* 2012; Sacchetti and Borzaga 2017).

While participatory decision-making can be based on the principle of *one member, one vote*, several of the cases also emphasise deliberative processes of face-to-face communication to maximise the sharing of members' viewpoints, and foster understanding of each other's thoughts and priorities. The aim is both to confer legitimacy on decisions reached, and to produce higher quality outcomes by discovering the "best", the wisest, or the right decision' (Rothschild 2016: 8). In what Rothschild calls the 'collectivist-democratic' logic (2016: 8), deliberative processes enable human values to shape organisational and individual behaviour, opening the door for issues of ethics and societal wellbeing to be brought into economic debates that were previously dominated by narrowly defined technical or efficiency goals.

Cases in which deliberative processes are at the heart of meaningful participation include the Civil Society Platform on the IMF Programme in Ghana, where knowledge and expertise were shared and issues and ideas debated at national fora events, resulting in joint communiques and policy recommendations. At W.L. Gore & Associates, the decision-making structure is designed to enable complex interpersonal engagement and direct person-to-person communication in order to foster ownership in collective decisions. Another example is the Citizens' Economic Council programme, which brings together 54 randomly selected citizens to discuss their values with respect to economic issues and to co-produce agreed public perspectives and practical recommendations, in collaboration with policymakers, economists and other stakeholders. While deliberation is often premised on face-to-face interaction, it could in theory be enabled at distance, e.g. through technology. For example, the Buen Vivir Fund combines an annual in-person learning event with two virtual assembly meetings where joint decision-making takes place.

¹⁴

www.mondragon-corporation.com/en/our-businesses/companies-and-cooperatives/

However, the use of deliberative practices is not without challenges. Rothschild (2016) finds that these forms have not generally gained traction in some contexts, such as national politics or in large corporations. While in theory, all participants involved in deliberation processes are equal and empowered to participate and make decisions in a collective manner, structural inequalities make this outcome unlikely. In contrast to models that emphasise one person, one vote, deliberation processes may therefore result in certain groups being under-represented (e.g. youth, women) while others exert undue influence (e.g. advisory stakeholders). Language or education barriers can be exclusionary or limit the quality of deliberation, as can group think or the holding of entrenched positions by some groups (Gakhal 2016; Mansbridge *et al.* 2012).

Nevertheless, deliberation may be a particularly important means to bring together groups which are normally on opposite sides of economic processes, seeking solutions that enable different interests to be pursued through cooperation, and may contribute to respect and trust between these different constituencies (Mansbridge *et al.* 2012; Sacchetti and Borzaga 2017). For example, in the cases of the Buen Vivir Fund and RSF Social Finance, investors and investees that are normally on competing sides of financial transactions come together to discuss their needs and interests, and collaboratively agree investment terms that satisfy both, as described above. In the case of Banco Palmas in Brazil, the Bank had a clear mission of supporting a solidarity economy that benefits both producers and consumers, based on a community currency that fosters trade rather than accumulation. The Local Socioeconomic Forum (Fórum Socioeconômico Local – FECOL) conducts weekly meetings where consumers, producers, merchants, public institutions and representatives of cultural, sportive and religious movements discuss together community social and economic issues.

5.5 Democratised knowledge

Knowledge and expertise are powerful resources, particularly in technocratic or deliberative forms of decision-making. Challenging economic power therefore means democratising knowledge by widening the scope of those who have control over knowledge resources and demystifying technical information, while also recognising the legitimacy of different types of (non-technical) knowledge (Gaventa and Cornwall 2001; Leach and Scoones 2007; Tandon *et al.* 2016).

Promoting transparency, strengthening information flow and public participation are often seen to go hand in hand as enablers of good governance and effective decision-making (van Doeveren 2011; Woods 2000). For many of the cases in this research, transparency, openness and flow of information are core enablers. For example, the Citizen Helpdesks in Liberia assists communities to understand and therefore act upon mineral development agreements related to mining operations affecting their area. Markets for Change in the Pacific Islands seeks to promote more transparent and accountable decision-making processes by market managers, in ways that increase the voice and participation of women market vendors.

However, while transparency and information are important features of participation, they are insufficient (McGee and Edwards 2016). Leach and Scoones' (2007) research on social movements identifies knowledge politics as a central feature affecting participation in domains such as genetically modified crops, watershed management and antiretroviral treatment. This knowledge politics involves contestations between different framings of issues and different claims to knowledge-based authority. While the economy is often framed as a highly technical area that is beyond the understanding of *non-experts*, as Leach and Scoones highlight, different types of experience lead to different constructions of an issue and its potential solutions. Grass-roots and civil society experiences can offer alternative forms of expertise based on experiential *knowing* (Gaventa and Cornwall 2001; Heron and Reason 2008).

The Civil Society Platform on the IMF Programme in Ghana, for example, helped to reframe the problem of fiscal indiscipline from being a macroeconomic problem that is the preserve of policy experts, to one which directly impacts household spending due to inflation and affects funding for social protection, key concerns of civil society groups. In addition to safeguarding pro-poor and social protection spending following fiscal consolidation, the Platform called for an ongoing civil society voice to bring grass-roots ideas for better fiscal discipline into economic policy dialogue.

Efforts to democratise knowledge may also involve popular economic literacy to demystify technical information, and enable people to gather and make sense of economic data on their own terms.¹⁵ Efforts may include the translation of jargon or concepts into everyday language or pictures, and building capacity to use that information. For example, one of the joint (investor–investee) working groups set up during the development of the Buen Vivir Fund focused on diagrams and infographics for community explainers and advocacy materials. In the case of Puma LETS, a self-regulating alternative currency operating within the working-class neighbourhood of Pumarejo in Seville, Spain, the starting point was a workshop through which a cross section of the community acquired basic knowledge and skills to start the Puma currency. The workshop also began a process of mapping and linking local needs and available resources. Finally, in participatory guarantee systems, farmers are not only trained on relevant standards, such as organic production, but also collectively manage the scheme. They approve producers to participate in it, and review standard implementation via a farmer-to-farmer peer review mechanism.

Finally, democratising knowledge involves people gathering their own evidence or engaging technical *experts* on their own terms. Banco Palmas, for example, emerged from community efforts to map local employment and work conditions, and later also family spending, in order to understand for themselves – and then address – the causes of poverty in their community. The Civil Society Platform on the IMF Programme in Ghana draws on the expertise of academics to prepare independent assessments of financial results as one input to forum meetings. Key resource persons help the Platform understand the implications of macro figures with respect to issues identified as important by the CSOs, while a diverse panel of forum participants further debates and distils these findings. On the basis of these deliberations, communiques are agreed which set out the Platform’s position and advocacy asks.

6 From participation to economic justice

Since the industrial revolution, different parts of the world have experienced different ways of organising economic production, including through diverse varieties of capitalism, forms of centralised or market socialism and Keynesian welfare states (Adaman, Devine and Ozkaynak 2003). However, none of these forms has adequately delivered development in which people are effective protagonists of their own advancement. While Sections 4 and 5 assessed the empirical case evidence to understand the achievements and enabling conditions of participation in economic affairs, this section is a more speculative exploration of the prospects for such forms to enable transformational change towards a more just economy.

¹⁵ In addition to the case examples, a bibliography of economic education resources has been produced by Just Associates and IDS, and can be found here: <https://justassociates.org/en/resources/demystifying-economics-scoping-economic-education-resources>.

6.1 Participation and re-embedding the economy

The cases in this research involve the mobilisation of *ordinary people* as knowledgeable actors with the resources and authority to influence economic decisions that affect their lives. These processes are what Max Weber would have termed 'substantively rational' (quoted in Rothschild 2016: 8) because they are based on human values such as fairness, reciprocity and cooperation, values that constitute the 'glue that binds our species' (Dash 2016: 80). Although these values have been pushed out of much economic governance by the dominance of neo-classical economics and its narrow definition of *rationality* and utility maximisation, participation can enable people to make decisions about the use of resources and allocation of risks that better reflect justice and cooperation. It helps puts humanity back at the heart of a more diverse economy which is not only about producing goods and services for the market, but also about sharing and care economies (Cameron and Gibson 2005; Raworth 2017).

Contrast, for example, PEKKA's system of saving and borrowing cooperatives with typical microcredit provided by mainstream financial institutions. Mainstream microcredit offers households access to capital, using the power of social relationships to create joint liability as a form of collateral, in order to generate interest that accrues earnings for shareholders or investors. However, in PEKKA, as women are the owners of their own finance institution, they are not only able to access capital, but they also to set rules for saving and borrowing and make lending decisions on their own terms. Higher income is not the main purpose but having more control over their economic future and having better economic opportunities is key. They emphasise flexibility, ease of procedure, and encouragement of women's independence in doing business. PEKKA members involved in PEKKA Marts similarly discuss and decide together key parameters including profit sharing, payment terms, and prices. Most of the groups have decided that the share of the profit that they receive is paid into a social fund (e.g. which acts as a type of life and health insurance). Being able to buy from PEKKA Mart gives them improved control over time and expenditures on basic needs, which is economically important as these purchases form a large part of their total household expenditures each month.

For Banco Palmas in Brazil, the participatory community mapping of household spending led to an understanding that local families together spent an average of R\$1.2m a month (US\$1m) on general shopping, but most of it (80 per cent) was made outside the community. They also found that local enterprises were excluded from commercial credit due to excessive formal requirements. Their conclusion was that the 32,000 residents of Conjunto Palmeiras were not completely poor, but that their external spending was sending wealth outside the local economy. In response, the local community association started Banco Palmas and a local currency (the 'Palma') to encourage local exchange, discourage wealth extraction and make credit locally available. Lending decisions by Banco Palmas are not focused on narrowly defined ability to pay, and so enable a broader number of residents to have access to credit while also reinforcing community ties. In case of difficulties repaying loans, a dialogue with debtors searches for solutions instead of imposing penalties, which are only given when bad faith is proven. On the other hand, loans have also been denied on the basis of poor community behaviour, such as regularly wasting too much water in the northeast of Brazil, where droughts have a long, problematic history.

While these examples of reorienting economic activity to support community wellbeing and related goals are most apparent among the grass-roots economic alternatives, the Buen Vivir Fund is attempting to bring these values into a more international context involving also US-based institutional investors. The Fund's vision is to be transformative rather than transactional in its investments. By basing activities on grass-roots members' expertise and experience of non-extractive lending and sharing wealth, the Fund and its members have developed investment terms and practices that radically depart from those of Wall Street and

Silicon Valley. Risks are shifted away from rather than onto investees, while gains are collectivised within the Fund, rather than transferred to investors via interest.

Cases such as these suggest that more participatory approaches can be part of re-embedding, as Polanyi (1944) would see it, the economy in social relations. The economy becomes an engine of social provisioning (Dash 2016); a system for (re)production and exchange of wealth and wellbeing, rather than profit maximisation. Put another way, if the neo-classical market is a price discovery and coordination mechanism, participation brings a values discovery and coordination mechanism into the economy. Market-based exchanges are taking place, but they are based on a more substantive rather than narrow understanding of *rationality*. Furthermore, the market does not have to be the only means of provisioning, which may also operate through mechanisms such as reciprocity and distribution (Polanyi 1944, quoted in Dash 2016: 70).

Participation also offers an alternative to hierarchy as the main organising principle of economic governance. While hierarchies, such as firms, are lauded for their efficiency, decisions are normally taken based on a rationality which is not only narrowly defined, in the sense of excluding broader human values, but also bounded (Simon 1957), in the sense of top officials having limited ability to access and process relevant information, especially in regards to complex problems. Hierarchy also undermines the space for cooperation and collective action (Sacchetti and Borzaga 2017). Participatory forms of economic governance, in contrast, employ 'different rationalities', 'relational capital' and 'cooperative logic' (Dash 2016: 69) instead of, or often alongside, modified forms of hierarchy. For example, in the case of W.L. Gore & Associates, while divisional and functional leaders still exist, they are those with the most relevant knowledge and ability to gain followers, not those who are put *in charge*. For PEKKA, while all members have a voice at local group level, at the national level, PEKKA is organised as a federation of associations. Leaders and representatives of the associations are democratically elected to set agendas for action and take decisions. In these modified hierarchies, different parties that are knowledgeable about and affected by issue are better able to engage in them, which can lead to stronger decision-making and economic strategies that enable different interests to be pursued. Hierarchies, on the other hand, generate opportunity costs from the failure to produce goods of higher societal value (Sacchetti and Borzaga 2017).

6.2 Connecting economic with civic and political participation

If broadening participation in economic governance transforms the economy in ways that respond to society's goals, are there other connections between the practice of participation in economic decision-making, and that in social or political spheres? In other words, does participation in economic affairs create the enabling conditions for more democratic politics and wider civic and community participation?

Pateman (1970) argues that workplace participation generates a spillover effect, motivating employees' participation in other contexts through the creation of feelings of confidence and agency. A number of subsequent studies have sought to test or replicate these findings by exploring whether experiences such as involvement with cooperatives, employee share ownership schemes, unions or more generally independence in work daily management and influence over policy decisions are correlated with political participation, as well as the direction of any causality. The net results produce a far from clear picture. Some studies back Pateman's findings that participation in the workplace supports participation in politics (Godard 2007; Sobel 1993; Verba, Lehman Schlozman and Brady 1995), while others suggest that democratic participation precedes that in the workplace (Cohen and Vigoda 1999). Still further studies find a relationship but with uncertain causality, context sensitivity or multiple entry points (Bryson *et al.* 2013; Budd, Lamare and Timming 2017; Greenberg, Grunberg and Daniel 1996). Rothschild (2016) finds no connection, at least with respect to

the growth of grass-roots cooperatives and voluntary activity in the US, since this activity has not been accompanied by an invigoration of representative democracy. Rothschild concludes that 'one can grow while the other atrophies' (2016: 15). An alternative interpretation, however, could be that one has grown because the other has atrophied.

Our cases have tended towards Cohen and Vigoda's (1999) conclusion that political precedes economic participation. In several cases, existing political and social movements were in fact the springboard to more participatory forms of economic activity. The origins of Banco Palmas, for example, are rooted in the local residents' association, ASMOCONP, and their fight for social services and infrastructure. Even before ASMOCONP, the community had experience of social participation through grass-roots religious organising. Another case, RUDI in India, is a local food trade and distribution system owned by self-employed women workers and small-scale farmers that was set up by SEWA (the Self-Employed Women's Association). SEWA's origins are political, as a trade union and social movement advocating for legislative change in support of women working in the informal sector. RUDI was thus built on a foundation of women's solidarity fostered over SEWA's 40-year history. Similarly, Asmare, the association of *catadores* in Brazil started by fighting to promote and protect the rights of informal workers to earn a living. However, it has subsequently begun to operate as a cooperative, managing its own compressing and bulk weighing centre, and engaging in collective sorting, processing and sale of recyclables. Asmare and 22 other local *catadores'* organisations have also joined to form 'Cataunidos', a network of cooperatives that have moved from selling recyclables to owning and working in their own plant to produce pellets from recycled plastic. Here prior experiences with social and political participation are supporting the creation of new economic forms.

In two cases, however, we did find the relationship working in the opposite direction, with economic participation at the root of or at least emerging in parallel with political participation: PEKKA and the WRE movement in Argentina. In the case of WREs, former employees were seizing control of failed enterprises and restarting them under worker self-management. Their logic was that they had a right to expropriate and run these enterprises, since they produced the value embedded in the products, which lay in the now-abandoned premises. However, soon after taking over the abandoned factories, these workers were forced to fight lengthy judicial and political processes to avoid eviction by the police and asset stripping of the factories by their former employers. Self-mobilisation, and associational activity experienced in the creation of the worker-recovered enterprises offered learning and experiences to support political participation in response to this external threat.

For PEKKA in Indonesia, associational activity in the form of savings and borrowing cooperatives has been a positive basis for more political and civic participation, by creating confidence and feelings of agency in women that had previously experienced high levels of social exclusion. Mathie *et al.* (2017), who also study PEKKA, highlight how the relationships of mutual accountability found within the cooperatives also act as an important foundation for political action. Their findings echo Putnam's (1993) seminal work on participatory democracy and economic vibrancy in the context of the global North (northern Italy). Putnam points to the importance of associational activity in the economic sphere as building trust between individuals which then encourages greater civic engagement.

Despite this case of a positive relationship between the experience of participation in economic affairs and engagement in political activities, it is important to also recognise that political participation has been deliberately fostered in the case of PEKKA, rather than emerging as an unintentional positive consequence. PEKKA cooperatives are supported by local fieldworkers who provide mentoring, link members with available training, and support processes of *female popular education*. Through these processes, members have access to a participatory problem-solving approach to learning and action, enabling them to make decisions, lead within their organisations and to use the cooperatives as a platform to

engage with allies and government officials. Since 2015, the PEKKA Foundation has also specifically strengthened capacities for community engagement and public deliberation through the Paradigta Academy, which offers training in areas such as writing, leadership, advocacy, communications and village law. As a result of both the experiences with economic participation and the direct support for political activities, PEKKA members have successfully advocated for improved infrastructure, access to public funds and skills training, among other goals.

6.3 Challenges to participation in economic governance

The experiences and achievements exemplified by the Buen Vivir Fund, the Civil Society Platform on the IMF Programme in Ghana, PEKKA and the other cases are inspiring. They provide empirical evidence of the potential for people to participate in a meaningful way in an economy that better responds to society's and communities' needs and is better aligned with human values. However, these efforts are not without challenges and questions. This final section explores three key challenges that are common issues within the participation literature: who is participating, how are power relations affecting participation, and what is the potential for participation to permeate the mainstream?

6.3.1 Whose participation?

A risk inherent in participatory processes is that they are dominated by certain groups, whether because they are co-opted by elites, or because marginalised people feel intimidated, are told they lack the relevant language or legitimacy to contribute, or because they themselves do not believe that they have a right to participate (Petit 2016; Oswald *et al.* 2018). These challenges also emerge in several of the cases studied.

The Civil Society Platform in Ghana successfully united diverse CSOs to collectively influence macroeconomic and fiscal policy. Yet constrained in resources, the Platform has been frustrated in its vision to have strong regional representation across Ghana. To date, most activities have been restricted to Accra, although the Platform is actively seeking alternative avenues to broaden its reach such as collaborating with regionally based CSOs and using radio to share information translated into local dialects. Other ideas of how to better reach more isolated regions come from the Citizens' Economic Council programme in the UK. Over and above the 54 citizens involved in the core deliberation process set up by the programme, an *Economic Inclusion Roadshow* travelled to other parts of the country, engaging 190 socially and economically marginalised citizens. The programme also ensured appropriate access support, such as translators for those with language barriers and access support for people with disabilities.

Alongside the Citizens' Economic Council programme, PEKKA and NASVI, for example, offer other cases of previously marginalised women and men successfully participating in economic governance. However, the case collection offers no evidence that participatory economic decision-making *necessarily* includes the most marginalised. For example, participation may increase the capacity of already skilled workers (e.g. W.L. Gore & Associates) or international NGOs (e.g. Jubilee Debt Campaign) that were nevertheless previously excluded from some economic decisions to realise their potential or transform their societies. Although such efforts are valuable on their own terms, they do not necessarily involve socially marginalised or physically isolated groups.

Beyond practical constraints, discriminatory norms can lead to exclusion, even in solidarity-based movements. As Guijt and Kaul Shah (1998) argue in *The Myth of Community*, participation involves complex processes of social change, and what is often framed as a homogeneous community has its own internal dynamics and differences. These dynamics mean the opinions and priorities of those with more power and ability to make themselves heard tend to dominate, while others are marginalised on the basis of age, religion, caste,

ethnicity, disability or gender. In Argentina's WRE movement, for example, women workers often had to fight within the cooperatives to gain or defend their role in factory governance. Despite some factories having progressive ideas about gender relations that ensured women also had an equal voice, *machismo* persisted in others.

Moreover, participation that seeks to empower often runs into resistance from traditional powerholders (Gaventa 1998) or may face more structural hurdles. Meyers and Vallas (2016) studied issues of gender or racial exclusion and conflict in two cooperatives in the US. While both cooperatives sought equality among their diverse membership, one saw tensions related to gender and racial differences as deriving from problems external to its operations, and responded by raising awareness of the potential for bias. The other cooperative saw these tensions as arising from exclusion that was inherent to the economy and its structures and were also being replicated within internally. This cooperative encouraged discussion and debate to identify and address these structural barriers. While the first cooperative developed even deeper divisions of labour based on gender and race, the second maintained more integrated work teams (Rothschild 2016).

Race and gender are not the only possible lines of cleavage. For Puma LETS, success led to rapid scaling that created managerial and coordination problems and undermined trust and solidarity between different constituencies within Puma LETS. While *de-growth* activists saw the initiative as a stepping stone to an alternative economic system, community activists saw it as practical way to defend neighbourhood values, and poor families saw it as a way to reduce vulnerability and exclusion from the formal economy. Puma LETS responded with a period of hibernation, followed by the development of new membership rules that required some degree of shared values and participation in organisational management. These new rules excluded those whose goals were not aligned with the activists that had initiated it, or who had less time or inclination to be involved in organisational tasks.

6.3.2 Power dynamics

In all spaces where economic decision-making happens, multiple forms of power will be operating and affecting the way that participation works (Gaventa 2006; Oswald *et al.* 2018; see also powercube.net). While participation implies that formerly excluded groups are empowered through increased control over resources and institutions, not all participants in the new governance arrangements will have equal power, and this balance of power may also change over time. For example, although advocacy coalitions and networks within the solidarity economy can empower their members and enable participation (see Section 5.3), doing so successfully requires that these coalitions are also able to manage differences, including power differences (Gaventa and Mayo 2010).

A case in point is the Jubilee Debt Campaign. Although the Campaign was supported by a powerful global movement and led to the clearance of approximately US\$100bn of debt owed by more than 35 countries, imbalances between Northern and Southern activists marginalised Southern voices. While many Southern activists sought a more explicitly political movement against unjust debt supported by relevant and impactful campaign tactics, many Northern activists were focused on advocacy to address the unsustainability of particular debts. Given their greater access to technical skills and resources, Northern campaigners had disproportionate power in decision-making, which eventually weakened the global movement as southern campaigners established *Jubilee South* as a distinct entity.

At Banco Palmas, new partnerships constructed with external organisations such as NGOs, governments, universities and the private sector have strengthened the bank's financial capability and external recognition. They allow the bank to provide more services to the community and are a source of community pride. However there is also a risk that the pressures of managing these new financing relationships and the impact of the external

connections enjoyed by the Banco Palmas Institute that manages these relations, could shift the power balance away from the community and towards national or international partners (Steponaitis 2014). This would have substantial consequences for the development and survival of Banco Palmas, which is dependent on the bank's rootedness in a broad, participative local movement. A number of other banks within the BNCP are struggling for survival, particularly where they lack clear residents' support and participation.

Of course, power also operates outside participatory decision-making spaces, affecting the agency of these movements and their members within the external economic and political sphere. Despite PEKKA's many successes, for example, external power relations exercised through social norms continue to act as a repressive force. This disempowerment is both internal to PEKKA members, where norms affect women's sense of their own *power within* (Oswald *et al.* 2018), and external to the movement, rooted in the lack of respect that female heads of household still experience from others in the community. The social norms that drive these power dynamics are slow and difficult to change. Even where the women have formal village leaders on their side, tribal customs and the (hidden) power of informal traditional leaders make change extremely challenging.

6.3.3 Scale of participation

Rothschild (2016) in her paper on *The Logic of a Co-operative Economy and Democracy 2.0* contrasts what she describes as bureaucratic forms of organisation (Democracy 1.0) with collectivist-democratic forms (Democracy 2.0). Democracy 1.0 involves representative decision-making and centralised authority, and is generally practiced by publicly traded firms, large non-profit organisations and national government agencies, which often resist greater participation in decision-making. In contrast, Democracy 2.0 is the domain of cooperatives, advocacy groups, self-help groups, social movement organisations, and municipal initiatives, where the legitimacy of decisions depends on all affected individuals having a voice in it. Does this suggest, however, that meaningful participation in economic matters can only truly work at small scale, and through closed systems of exchange, distribution and reciprocity?

Many of the cases studied do seem to rely on small-scale structures that are also geographically situated in specific communities, marketplaces or municipalities, or based on closed local trading system. These conditions enable face-to-face communication and mutuality, which underpin processes of deliberation and cooperation. W.L. Gore & Associates, for example, ensures that none of the company's facilities exceed 200 employees in order to allow for complex personal interactions and genuine communication that supports ownership in collective decisions. In the case of Mondragon, the cooperatives that form the corporation generally number no more than 400–500 workers. Beyond this number, cooperatives generally split as coordination problems arise and cooperative solidarity is undermined.¹⁶ Puma LETS has also faced managerial and coordination problems due to rapid scaling, as described above.

On the other hand, cases like the Ghana Civil Society Platform on the IMF Programme, the Jubilee Debt Campaign, NASVI and PEKKA, while being rooted in direct participation in local associations or civil society groups, are also able to 'take scale into account' (Fox 2016: 9), by linking the grass roots to decision-making at national and/or global levels through federated structures. These federations enable an exchange of knowledge, resources, and legitimacy between different levels of the federation. While there is a risk in these types of structures that processes get co-opted by certain groups (a challenge faced by the Jubilee Debt Campaign, for example), efforts can be taken to address these risks.

¹⁶ <https://participedia.net/case/82>

Gaventa and Mayo (2010), for example, have demonstrated how this has worked in the Global Campaign for Education (GCE). Founded in 1999 to advocate for free and quality education for all, the GCE involves 1,000 organisations in over 100 countries. Gaventa and Mayo find that it has persisted at this scale and geographical reach due to its ability to navigate difference, establish trust and find mutually accepted ways to frame issues across the different organisational levels. Local organisations keep the transnational network locally *rooted*, while international organisations provide resources and legitimacy. These findings echo Rothschild's conclusion that Democracy 2.0 organisations can scale to fairly large size while retaining their participatory nature, provided they avoid hierarchies and retain social bonds among all members.

PEKKA, for example, has achieved an impressive scale in its cooperative activity. Across the federation, 31,447 women are organised in 2,559 PEKKA groups in 1,232 villages across 20 provinces of Indonesia. PEKKA groups also send democratically elected representatives to participate in association structures at district and national levels, achieving vertical scale, though primarily in the political domain. The development of this national federation followed a seven-year process of democratic, leadership and organisational development designed to retain participation in line with Democracy 2.0 principles. For PEKKA, the key unresolved question now is how the movement can build on this base to operate economically (and not just politically) at this vertical scale.

Similarly, the global reach of the Buen Vivir Fund, involving grass-roots organisations from Asia, Africa and Latin America, as well as US-based institutional investors, is based on relational capital and also supported through technology. Reciprocal trust and authentic relationships between these geographically disparate investors and investees has been established due to these groups' long-term relationships with the Fund manager, Thousand Currents. These relationships were then further developed during the Fund's co-design process. This process included a five-day face-to-face workshop involving 20 representatives from the ten participating grass-roots organisations, eight investors and six Thousand Currents staff, along with five advisers and a team of translators. A video documentary of the workshop was made for the representatives to share the experience with their constituents back home. Working groups on key topic and dozens of one-to-one consultations followed on from the workshop. Ongoing participation is enabled via video conferencing, with representatives attending two virtual Members Assembly meetings per year as well as one annual in-person learning exchange. In terms of scale, the Fund has intentionally started small, with 18 members and US\$1m in loan capital for its first investment cycle (2018–20). However, it plans to expand to 30–50 members and US\$5m in investments over the next five years. If the Fund is able to do so in ways that maintain its relational capital and transformational nature, it may offer important learning for how to organise broad participation in economic affairs.

7 Conclusion

The objective of this Working Paper is to learn from a series of empirical examples how the concepts and practices of participation can be applied to economic affairs. Specifically, it aimed to identify enabling conditions for meaningful participation in economic governance, understood as 'organised efforts to increase control over resources and regulative institutions' (Stiefel and Wolfe 1994: 5) by those who had previously been without a significant voice. It also aimed to explore the wider implications of participation for issues of economic justice. Examples were collected across three domains: alternative business and financing models, citizen voice in government economic policymaking and grass-roots economic alternatives.

The findings highlight five conditions that enable meaningful participation, many of these familiar from participatory practice elsewhere: distributed authority; mobilisation; working in networks and coalitions; deliberation; and democratised knowledge. However, these operate in particular ways in the context of the economy. First, concepts of accountability and rights are less well embedded in economic practice than they are in democratic politics, meaning that more intentional effort is needed to create the legitimacy for participation, or at least to raise awareness of this legitimacy. Second, and related, widening asset ownership, such as collective ownership of enterprises or other productive entities, is one key avenue through which people claim a voice in decision-making. Third, many of the enabling conditions and practices of participation challenge dominant economic tenets. Participation creates space for cooperation, rather than relying on competition as the prime mechanism of economic activity, for example. Participation can also bring human values into the economic sphere, redefining economic expertise away from being a narrow domain of technical experts.

The 25 examples and three in-depth case studies explored demonstrate ways in which people have been gaining greater control over resources and shaping the institutional, normative and regulatory frameworks that determine how economies work. They show how participation might better enable people to transform their lives, and societies to re-embed economic activity within social control. Connections can also be made between participatory economic practice and other forms of political and social participation, although these linkages cannot be taken for granted and are likely to require active cultivation. However, the findings also suggest that *participatory* is not necessarily *inclusive*, and that power within and outside participatory decision-making spaces conditions the quality of participation and the outcomes achieved. Moreover, the potential for participation to be transformational with respect to the economy depends on changes moving beyond narrow geographies or activist niches towards the everyday and the *mainstream*.

While this research has identified a number of promising ways in which participation in economic governance and decision-making is challenging economic power and creating a greater degree of economic justice, there is still much to be learned. More examples need to be assessed, particularly in relation to alternative business and financing models and citizen voice in government economic decision-making, which are relatively less well-developed areas than work on the SSE, for example. Each of the enabling conditions could be individually explored, to understand in greater depth their parameters and limits in the economic arena. The exploratory discussion of how participation contributes to economic justice and the re-embedding of the economy in society could be further developed. In particular, more work is needed on how to build from this base towards an ecosystem-wide approach. Achieving significant economic advancement is likely to require proactively building and linking meaningful participation across social, political and economic institutions at different scales, while ensuring that we *leave no one behind*.

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